

VZCZCXRO8175

RR RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBC RUEHBW RUEHDA RUEHDE RUEHDF RUEHDIR RUEHFL

RUEHIK RUEHKUK RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHLN RUEHLZ RUEHPOD RUEHROV RUEHSR

RUEHVK RUEHYG

DE RUEHNC #0313 1410408

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

R 200408Z MAY 08

FM AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8776

INFO RUEHDL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE

RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 2115

RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4306

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1137

RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 0031

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

UNCLAS NICOSIA 000313

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE, IO/UNP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL CCY

SUBJECT: ON LEBANON, CYPRIOTS RELUCTANT TO CRITICIZE
HIZBALLAH, SYRIA

REF: SECSTATE 52061

¶1. (SBU) Ambassador, adding thanks for the steps Cyprus has taken to facilitate USG logistical needs in the recent crisis in Lebanon, spoke with MFA Political Director and former Ambassador to Washington Evripides Evriviades on May 19 to deliver points in reftel.

¶2. (SBU) Evriviades said that the RoC shared our strong backing of the Arab League's mediation of the Lebanon crisis and support of the agreement announced in Beirut on May 15. Citing Cyprus's historical experience, he also agreed that no government should be forced to negotiate at gunpoint.

¶3. (SBU) When Ambassador conveyed the point urging public and private statements condemning Hizballah's recent actions, Evriviades said that the RoC would continue to express strong support for Lebanon and the government of Lebanon, and would in private conversations make clear whom it saw as responsible for the violence, but doubted that there would be specific condemnations of Hizballah since at this stage condemnations could work against the success for the Doha talks; Ambassador disagreed, noting that clear international support could only help the GOL's position inside and outside the negotiating room. To Ambassador's point urging designation of Hizballah as a terrorist entity, Evriviades said that Cyprus as a member of the EU would follow any EU decision on the issue, but admitted that he saw little likelihood that Brussels would move in this direction. Evriviades did muster some enthusiasm for the point urging full compliance with relevant UNSCRs, and noted that Cyprus wished the international community could similarly emphasize the several unfulfilled UNSCRs relevant to Cyprus.

¶4. (SBU) Evriviades's reply to the point on exerting pressure on Syria suggested a desire not to make Cyprus's neighbor in Damascus angry. Ambassador noted that he had heard this argument before, but Nicosia's concern for Damascus's sensibilities had yielded zero benefits: Asad had stiffed Cyprus on its plea to stop the Latakia-Famagusta ferry, and illegal migrants from Syria kept arriving on the island. A tougher stance, especially on an important point of principle in support of the GOL, might do more to get Damascus's attention, even while doing the right thing.

SCHLICHER